

FROM: TO SLAY A JABBERWOCKY

IAN WOOLLEY

Long did I walk downward, deeper within the dragon's body,
With my mute companions: sword, dagger, and shield,
Lance left lodged in the lithe dragon's side.
Were it not for the blade of moonlight and mothwings,
As bright as full moon's night,
A dark and treacherous walk it would be.
The weird winding passage is much larger than the witch-thing
 seemed from without,
Filled with the foul fumes of its seeping phlogistons,
And the over-ripe remnants of cattle,
As well as rubble from houses and keeps.
(This beast is as fond of houses as horses and humans.)
Clearly seen are these chunks of men, beasts, and buildings,
Yet, hard-edged shadows provide for superior places to slink.
Their sneaking muffled by the burbling of the beast; they had me
 surprised.
A chitinous collection of their clawed tentacles gave only a chatter of
 warning
Before I heard a whine long unheard by me,
Hot beams of light ionized the air as they lanced out from all around
 me,
How this beast became host to drones with lasers I did not stop to
 wonder.
Fortunate it was this morn against such arms I girt myself,
Despite no reports regarding the ravening beast possessing such
 dangers,
A sage named Prudence advised, "Protection from laser would be
 prudent."
Time for thought I did not have,
But monsters demanding to be slain in abundance I did.
Scarlet, crimson, and other shades of red beyond counting lit up the

long hall.
Shield discarded, a crawler crushed beneath,
Armor scored with searing bolts.
Turns out a blade made of moonbeams can bat those back.
And a dagger cast of ancient's bronze deeply digs into metal-woven
chitin.
A dozen split open from dagger, spraying shadow-stuff-blood
A dozen more blinded by reflected bolts,
(Why anything would shoot lasers from its eyes, I'll never know)
A great battle on any other day it would be,
But today it was an annoyance,
For soaked through were my boots with ichors.
And close to the hellish beast's heart I hoped I was getting,
Or doomed to walk within winding ways I feared.
But now alert for more chittering, my advance slows.
Dragon slaying is not supposed to be
 This hard
 Not this trudging within the beast.
 Although I am the peoples' ward,
 I'd rather be enjoying a feast,
 At least I am not bored.

Its heart, my sword's anvil to hammer upon.
Gore like flint-fire sparks and flies from my blows.
Each hewing strike echoes down quaking corridors.
Thin rivulets flow, grow into rivers.
Raging torrents of quicksilver and oils
Rushing from fissures riven by my reaping blade.
To the bone I am chilled, bathed in the blood of my foe, by combat
rebaptized.
Are my sins washed away by the expungment of the monster?
Or merely compounded with its crimes of reaving my lands?
The beast's body around me rumbles
As the chitinous walls of its corridors begin collapsing.
Now 'tis foolish to do anything but flee
As the crumbling walls seem to be caused by the recompression of
the creature,
Else I am expanding from a size I did not know I attained,
For the walls are closing in, much more so than they are crumbling.

Reverie interrupted, once clear upon this I will contemplate.

And so,
Through waist deep blood I wade
To hew upon the nearest walls
With my gleaming moon-blade.
Under which the chitin falls.

Epilogue

Before the sun rises, I ready my child and heir for battle, and reflect
Back on the strangest of serpents I had to ever slay.
Although I have aged long past anything considered prime
My decrepit condition is more caused by the cancers
Flooding my body from my ill-fortuned bath in filthy phlogistons.
Whether 'tis right to right wrongs with weapons,
Despite decades of slow death,
A dragon had to be dashed till it lay destroyed
Such as my doom is to die in defense of land and people.
Even as it is that of my doughty daughter.
Whether the beast was evil or was a mere beast,
The woe it wrought, wrathful or not, had needed stopping.
In the end it matters not,
Although its ruin repaired it still had its revenge upon me.
But now
My tale may be ending
But hers is just starting.
And so with grace and little pain
I yield the stage, content to not be main.